

Obligations of membership (from fusion conference)

Amendment to IB48 Spilling

Perspectives on black workers : James

"The aims of this document are to argue for a solid orientation to black workers instead of seeing them as a part of anti-racist work, and also for a method of work that is determined by the needs and struggles of black workers"

Amendment on CND Rowena J.

Report on the Single Transferable Vote ... Cunliffe, Kinnell, Smith

Resolution on women Collins, Fraser, Parkinson

1. IB 30 COLLINS Parts 1.3. and 4.

2. The modern women's movement differs from earlier movements in that it originated from a radical implicitly anti-capitalist current. It has had a major influence on the development of the struggle for women's rights and has achieved a number of limited gains for women on abortion, maternity rights, rape violence against women, pay, childcare etc. and in bringing the issue of women's oppression into the consciousness of the working class and more recently has had a major impact on the peace movement. Because of the failure of the revolutionary left to relate adequately to the women's movement it has resulted in a situation where the left is in a position of tail-ending the movement in a whole number of areas e.g. domestic violence etc. The women's movement has grown almost despite the left and the labour movement. Genuine difficulties in formulating class demands and action around questions that are primarily social and ideological ones and seem to cut across class lines, the difficulty of disentangling vested interests in male privileges etc which imply an attack on all men as men has meant that we have lost a lot of ground to the radical feminists. Many analyses have not been made on class grounds.

In a practical way WF was an attempt to relate to this phenomenon, to give leadership with the campaign to re-orientate the labour movement and to link the struggles of the women's movement to the struggles of working class women in an attempt to forge a new women's movement based on the working class. It is now more than ever a real possibility. The deepening capitalist crisis and the election of a Tory government consciously pushing a backlash in attitudes to women as an aid to its industrial strategy has seen working class women at the forefront of the fight to defend jobs and services. Whole sections of the women's movement have been re-orientated towards the labour movement best exemplified in the massive growth of women's sections in the MO which have broadened out the move for democracy into the whole question of sexism and its part in excluding women from political life. Similarly in the TU movement the fight for accountability and democracy has developed to include demands to ensure the full participation of women in TU life. We must relate to these forces and direct them outwards to link in with the struggles of working class women and also develop the struggles of working class women into the wider fight against women's oppression in all its aspects.

We set out to do this with WF, this move is still in its early stages and we must not abandon it now.

3. We therefore support the relaunch of WF as agreed at the EGM on the following lines: ' WF was launched three years ago. With a Tory govt. determined to drive women out of jobs and back into the home there was a need for a campaign based on the Labour movement using the strengths of the women's movement to organise women to fightback. If there was a need then it is even more necessary now. The Tories are rampant; the determined dismantling of the welfare state, unemployment, the think tank proposals on the family etc. The major focus for the next period must be to make our declared intention of bringing together a mass campaign of action of women against the Tories. The run up to a general election provides the focus for this. The forces are - women in the MO, women in struggles for jobs and against cuts in services, the women's peace movement.

WF needs to be able to offer a unifying political overview for women, spelling out why the Tory government is particularly devastating for women and showing the way to fightback, through women organising as part of the labour movement.

The women's peace movement has taken off massively. We need to relate to this and draw out the politics and build on the steps made towards bringing in the labour movement through the May 24th Day of Action for Peace. '

OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

1. As James P. Cannon argued:

"For the proletarian revolutionist the party is the concentrated expression of his life purpose, and he is bound to it for life and death. He preaches and practices party patriotism, because he knows that his socialist ideal cannot be realised without the party. In his eyes the crime of crimes is disloyalty or irresponsibility towards the party. The proletarian revolutionist is proud of his party. He defends it before the world on all occasions. The proletarian revolutionist is a disciplined man, since the party cannot exist as a combat organisation without discipline. When he finds himself in the minority, he loyally submits to the decision of the party and carries out its decisions, while he awaits new events to verify the disputes or new opportunities to discuss them again."(1)

Slow-moving, bureaucratic, social-democratic organisations require — and depend on — only a token level of activity from their members. A revolutionary organisation must be the opposite. To have the strength for the hard struggles it must wage, and to have the political sharpness and clarity it needs, it must have a high minimum level of activity and commitment from all its members.

2. At the same time, our perspective is not an all-out six-month dash from now to the revolution. And if we are to build a workers' organisation, our pace of activity must not be such as to pull comrades away from all normal social contacts.

Thus activity is organised so that its normal pace can be kept up without exhaustion and overstrain, and (so far as is possible) to accommodate comrades' difficulties, special interests etc. We do not demand superhuman energy from comrades, still less superhuman abilities, but only a basic commitment and sense of responsibility to revolutionary politics.

3. The basic minimum activity expected of all members is:

@ Regular attendance at and participation in:

- your League branch and any League committees you belong to;
- your local broad group (if one exists);
- your union branch and workplace union activity;
- your mass party and/or its youth section.

You should not miss any meetings or activities of these unless the branch or branch organiser has agreed to it. Where there is a clash of meetings, League meetings have priority unless your branch or committee decides otherwise.

@ Regular sales of the paper at work, to individual contacts, and at your labour movement meetings. Every comrade is required to sell a minimum of ten papers a week.

@ Basic financial commitments (dues and contributions).

@ Conscientious fulfilment of all obligations to the labour movement. If you take on a delegacy or an officership in your union branch, or if you promise your League branch you will do

(1) Where it reads "he", "his" etc., "she", "her" would apply.

a particular task, you must do it conscientiously.

4. You are also expected to abide by majority decisions, and decisions of elected leading committees in the League, even if you think they are unreasonable or wrong. (You also have the right to argue to change the decisions.)

You must be willing to discuss all your political activity in the League branch and committees, and accept the majority decisions. No freelancing!

5. Comrades from middle class backgrounds have a special responsibility in our fight to build a revolutionary workers' organisation. They must adapt themselves to a working class orientation. Our branch meetings should be meetings that workers feel comfortable in, and comrades from middle class backgrounds should contribute to that by disciplined behaviour and by being willing to learn from workers rather than lecture them.

6. All revolutionary activity depends on convincing people. In every area of work, comrades should seek out people who are interested in the paper or willing to discuss with us — and try to develop discussions, co-operation in practical work etc. Without this, routine labour movement activity can become an empty formality.

7. A revolutionary must try to educate those around him or her; s/he must also educate himself/herself and regard attendance at party educationals as central to this.

Much of revolutionary politics cannot be learnt from books, but only by activity in the class struggle. Book learning is, however, important too. Studying Marxism should be as important a regular activity as attending your union branch.

8. For the League to do what it needs to do, many activities are necessary over and above the bedrock work laid out in points 3 to 7. But such activities (taking on elected offices within the League or within the labour movement, extra paper sales, special campaigns etc.) are discussed and allocated by the branches on the basis of who is available, willing and able to do them. It is unusual for such extra activities to be made a matter of discipline, rather than done voluntarily out of commitment.

However:

a) It is a basic matter of revolutionary responsibility that once you have volunteered to do a job, you do it.

b) Full national mobilisations of all members may be required as a matter of discipline for certain demonstrations etc.

c) It is an essential part of being a revolutionary that you are willing to make an extra effort when a major struggle is on, eg a big strike in your area.

9. Members are obliged to consult the organisation about any changes of job or place of residence, or about taking on a job when leaving school or college.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO BULLETIN @ 48 (Smith, Jones, Cunliffe)

Submitted April 3 1983 by Spilling.

On Page 4: Delete second para ("Amongst trade union activists...") and replace with following:

Millions of workers in trade unions are not individual members of the Labour Party. Indeed they are not in trade unions from priori political conviction but because they have found trade union organisation essential to their daily existence at work. Most live in a state of constant dissatisfaction with the way those unions defend them but the majority do not in peaceful times play a highly active role in the union structure. When a workforce moves into action however the workforce then asserts its right to control and decide events in what it sees directly and simply as its own union, paid for out of its own money. This is the best example of the open valve analogy that has been used to describe the relationship between the unions and the LP. The vitality and militancy of the men and women in dispute spills directly into their own union and comes up directly against the blood clots with which the system has blocked the union's arteries. Although a similar valve may exist in theory between the unions and the K LP, in practice the relationship is very different.

The seven million workers in trade unions who have full Labour Party rights if they choose to use them do not respond to the LP in anything like the same way. The vast majority vote Labour and in dispute would automatically place demands on the local LP and on Labour M^rs. But even in times of mass action they do not flood into the LP or expect it to respond in the same way. Indeed there is one tradition amongst militants of a degree of scorn for the LP or indifference to it. Quite often in disputes the LP members in the workforce are not amongst the militants or the leading members. (This is obviously a generalisation; but it is by no means an unusual description). Labour Party membership is therefore regarded by many militants as unnecessary or even undesirable. While this is only one tradition within the ranks of union militants it cannot be dismissed as being the position of only died in the wool sectarians. We cannot overcome this by demanding that all militants overcome their phobias and turn to the LP- let alone that they see democratisation of the LP as primary. That is the wrong way round. Workers in the unions will turn to the LP when they see the LP responding to their struggles in a living way. Our task is therefore to be fighting to turn the wards and branches away from abstractions and towards interventions in those struggles. (The scope of this amendment and document has the weakness of not addressing itself to the relationship between the central disagreement in the movement, and work among women not in trade unions or the LP, and to work in CND. In general we would however similarly not expect the women's movement or CND to turn spontaneously to the LP or the unions- we would expect to fight in those organisations to build a real relationship with the mass movements). (ieL responsibility lies with LP and TUs).

In the trade unions we have to struggle against those who say: 'Keep politics out of the unions'. So in the LP we have to combat those who say they should not interfere in the internal affairs of the unions. We do want to interfere, if by that we mean influence, direct, lead and support with criticism where necessary. In the meantime if the paper we produce appears to be of the LP, only relevant to those in the LP, our ability to intervene is severely restricted.

2.

If there is a danger of self isolation that is where it lies. Nobody at present could seriously suggest we are in danger of 'self isolation' from the LP lefts. It would be truer to say we are in some danger of self isolation with the Labour lefts from many of the real struggles of the class.

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Final page of document: Para b) Delete all after "local disputes since fusion." Replace with:

Our purpose in intervening is to shape events and to give direction through direct involvement with the strikers. It may well be possible to do this by winning wards, or even constituencies to intervene in disputes, and to fight for particular demands within it. If that cannot be done we have a responsibility to plan and carry out our own interventions.

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BROADENING OUT THE STRUGGLES OF BLACK WORKERS AND YOUTH INTO THE MASS ORGANISATIONS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

Revolutionary Marxism has a long history of work and struggle inside the specially oppressed sections of the working class. In pre-revolutionary Russia and Eastern Europe the nationalities question was always a primary issue in the labour movement. Likewise in the United States, the programme for black workers was one of the major issues around the formation of the Fourth International section.

In the British labour movement the question of national/ethnic oppression was largely ignored until the late fifties when the growth of racism began to be seen as a threat to the organisations of the labour movement themselves. As the ruling class increasingly used racism as a stick with which to hit and divide the labour movement, militants in the unions and the left in the Labour Party were forced to make a stand.

However the political nature of that stand based on fear of the right wing/fascist threat and a form of liberal moralism has largely limited it to ANL style mass demonstration and propaganda campaigns. Through all the subsequent debates around the ANL, police accountability, workers self-defense, positive discrimination, only lip service appears to have been made to the problem of developing black workers as an organised force inside the labour movement.

Black workers are the first target of the capitalist state, but like all workers they are members of the revolutionary class. Their best defense against racist attack and oppression, is the organised strength of the whole working class under a revolutionary leadership. Black workers should be in a vanguard role in achieving this, and we in the WSL must develop ourselves so that we lead in this struggle. It is not enough to support black struggles, we must know enough about black workers, their organisations, and immediate problems so that we can struggle with them.

In Coventry in 1981 black workers organisations, entirely seperately from the Labour Party, ANL, Trades Council etc, mobilised ten thousand of their members onto the streets in protest at the murder of Satnam Gill. (this in London would be the equivalent of a million people). What occurred in Coventry at this time pivoted around the role of the Stalinist and reformist leaders of these organisations. They did everything in their power to demobilise the campaign, they appealed for calm, they blamed black youth in the press, they collaborated with the police, and used every delaying tactic in the book, and did all they could to take pressure of their right-wing friends in the Labour Council. It was only through the determined pressure of the militant workers in their organisations that they were forced to act. But it was also through the political weakness of these layers, that these leaders were able to regain control.

This was precisely the area in which our black comrades and the WSL should be able to intervene and lead and build upon. But you can't do that if your perspective is to support black struggles, you can't do that sitting in a Labour party ward waiting for a black worker to join. Neither can you do it, like an ex-comrade of ours, by drawing black youth away from black workers to join him in his fight against the Militant in his ward. On discovering that they were people with even worse politics than the Militant they denounced everyone, formed a vigilante group of five boys and their dog, and then all dropped out of politics.

Black workers are highly organised, and their organisations deal with most of the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of their lives. Black workers are fighting for survival in Britain, and they turn to these organisations to help them.

The problem with most of these organisations is not that they are NOT the Labour Party, but the reformist or Stalinist leadership who dominate them and ensure their isolation. The Toxteth uprisings show how black working class youth were failed by these organisations as well as by the rest of the British Labour movement.

While ultimately the interests of black workers in Britain are the same as all other workers, their history, tradition, perceptions, needs and immediate interests are not. Unlike the majority of white workers, the great majority of black workers have a hatred and bitter experience of British imperialism and neo-colonialism. They have few illusions about British justice and impartiality, the police, parliament and the leadership of the Labour movement. The older generation have experience of the anti-colonial struggle the younger of life in racist Britain.

It is not always the natural thing for a black worker to turn to a white shop steward for help. When he or she does it is often a political decision made after discussion in a black workers organisation. Most black workers are members of these associations, which are often linked to parties in the home country and are most often Stalinist or left reformist led. A few are reactionary or semi-fascist organisations. Because of the lack of opportunity for the black petty bourgeoisie, careerists, opportunists and functionaries abound in even greater numbers than is usual with workers organisations generally.

Black youth of the working class are disillusioned with many of these organisations and hostile to their reformist leaders. They see that many of these organisations are gripped with conservatism and traditionalism, often stuck with the old politics and divisions of the "home" country that are no longer relevant. With the other alternative being "white politics" which are usually less relevant to their needs, many are attracted to black nationalism, black separatism in its many different forms, some a-political, most anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

Comrades in the WSL have experience, gained especially during the last Labour government, of talking to workers who were disgusted by the betrayals of the Labour Party and said that they were the same as the Tories. We have all been with workers on picket lines, who could see all too clearly how they were being sold out by the bureaucrats and responded by wanting to tear up their union cards. These workers are just the kind we need to be fighting with us inside the Labour Party and in the unions. But they are politically undeveloped and inexperienced and have reached their conclusions from direct experience.

It is not a question of black workers organisations or the Labour Party, black defense or workers self-defense. Rather, it should be a question of developing struggles where they exist and directing them against the immediate obstacles that stand in their way. We must put ourselves in a position where we can fight the leadership both the Labour Party and in black workers organisations. We must organise immediate defence against racist attack, or defend picket lines, but we must also be able to mount the political fight for workers self-defense in both types of organisations.

We should never act as if the primary fight is in the Labour Party, and, for the rest, it is a matter of supporting black or anti-racist struggles. It is this sort of approach that has held back the struggle of black workers, and cripples anti-racist and fascist work, making it remain on the level of demonstration with a marginal impact on the Labour movement as a whole.

One of the most effective tactics for bridging this gap is through the creation of black workers alliances, or black labour alliances. These alliances should grow from the needs of black workers and youth, and not be artificially created as yet another separate organisation. They should be built from the perceived political need to break down the ethnic/religious/organisational barriers between black militants in order to bring the mass of black workers as an organised force to fight for their interests and defence as black workers, and to broaden that fight into the mass organisations of the labour movement.

These alliances serve little purpose if they are front organisations of any one political group, and do not consist of black workers from different organisations and different political or other backgrounds. The aim of the alliances should be to break down the isolation of groups of black workers, an isolation that is often created by the leadership for their own careerist ends. Through an alliance, the sectarianism of these leaders can be exposed to their own members, along with their political bankruptcy and collaboration with the enemies of all black workers.

These alliances, with the correct political leadership, can provide a bridge and continuity between the black workers organisations, single issue campaigns, and the unions and Labour Party, and the main course of the class struggle.

In them, groups outside the Labour Party and unions can be brought together around struggles in factories, racist attacks, campaigns, etc. It is a way of bringing people from different backgrounds and experiences together. In discussing and organising together, it soon becomes logical to develop attitudes towards the Labour Party and union work. From there it is easy to involve people in different aspects of the class struggle, develop them politically and begin the difficult task of building a base amongst black workers. This type of work also provides a perspective for our work amongst black youth, allowing us to take them into the struggles of black workers, and the black working class community as a whole. To show a way for black youth to take their revolutionary strength and enthusiasm into one of the most important sections of the working class.

To harden their conclusions in a revolutionary direction, you have to speak to their experience, answer the immediate problems that stand in their way, and be able to give leadership on a day to day basis. You have to show what the reformists and bureaucrats represent, why and how to fight them. Their starting point is totally different from "lefts" in the Labour Party, and so is the way we work with them and try to develop them.

Black working class militants and youth mostly have a political position of apathy or hostility towards the Labour Party, based on their experience of British imperialism, state oppression and racism, and the collaboration of the Labour movement leadership in it. The struggle they are facing is the immediate defence of the black working class community against racist attack, ultra low wages, ultra high unemployment, discrimination, state harassment, immigration laws, etc. It is not surprising that they do not see it as a political advance to be discussing whether there should or should not be immigration controls in a Labour Party ward. They see themselves as too busy fighting the racist immigration laws to bother discussing them with reformists in the Labour Party.

For both the militant worker, disillusioned with the Labour Party and unions, and working class black militants and youth, whatever motions were passed in the local Labour Party or at national conference, are irrelevant, unless they have a direct bearing on their actual struggle, and can show the way forward. We have to be able to bring them the answers to their immediate problems of struggle, NOT the answers to our problems of struggle against the right wing in the Labour Party. For example, black workers and youth under sustained harassment, attack, even murder, by the police will not find the slogan for police accountability of much relevance, especially if it is brought in by people outside of their organisations. Such a slogan addresses itself to the question of what to say to the right wing in the Labour Party, or to Tory councillors or MPs. Tactical formulations by the left, meant for the Labour Party manifesto, hardly provide answers to a community trying to defend itself now. Also, the slogan for workers self defence, although formally correct, is a complete abstraction, unless it is given an immediate content. If not, it simply becomes the answer to our theoretical problems.

We have no interest in getting black working class militants to leave their own organisations and join the Labour Party. On the contrary, we should be directing the militants and youth back into these organisations so that they can defeat their leaderships and turn their whole organisation to intervene in the Labour Party and unions. In order to do this we must be inside their struggles and organisations, fighting with them for their interests as black workers and youth. Only then can we talk to them and show them the collaboration of their own reformist/Stalinist leaders with the leadership of the Labour Party and unions. Show how these leaderships together betray and isolate every black struggle. Show them how to fight these leaders and argue that it must be linked to the same fight that is going on in the Labour Party and unions. When we do that, we are in a position to develop the correct demands that will answer their problems on a day to day basis.

It is from inside the struggles of black workers that we should be formulating our positions on the police, anti-racist work, self-defence, positive discrimination, etc. It is only from their struggle that we can know what the immediate blocks and dangers to their forward movement are; know how to use transitional demands to build a revolutionary leadership amongst black workers; and how to bring the full strength of black workers against the class enemy that faces all workers in Britain.

The aim of black workers alliances is to build the strength of black workers organisationally and politically under the direction of revolutionary working class leadership. Obviously, how this is begun, what precise form it takes, depends on the local circumstances. However, it is a myth, born out of the strength of some "Asian" workers organisations, that this approach can only apply to Southall, Coventry or Leicester. In Brixton alone there are many thousands of "West Indian" members of the London Transport unions alone, besides the thousands of other T & G and NUR members. There are countless national and semi religious/cultural organisations made up exclusively of black workers. It is precisely in these areas that black youth have to fight politically and build, and in this we must be politically developed enough to be able to help and provide leadership.

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION ON C.N.D. IN BROAD GROUPS
DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Rowena J.

1. Our main day-to-day participation in CND should be labour movement affiliations locally, invitations to speakers, etc. rather than mass individual membership.

2. For each major CND demonstration we produce either a special issue of the paper or a special leaflet or handout. This includes the YCND Festival.

3. We must work to expose the links between the aims of CND and other anti-imperialist work, in particular the Irish struggle. The specially-produced literature mentioned in 2) above should reflect this policy in a carefully-written way.

Women in particular in CND will respond very positively to discussion of the plastic bullets issue, army/police harassment of black/Irish women and their families, the situation of Palestinian women, etc. We must work, through WF in particular, for public discussion between anti-imperialist militants and anti-war women, as outlined by Wheeler.

4. In view of the early arrival of the first batch of missiles, effective labour movement action over and above the 24 May women's strike must be an urgent priority in NC discussion. There is a strong case for continuation of 24 May action. All branches and areas must be kept regularly informed of the latest situation regarding the missiles.

by us

5. Opposition to the Thatcher build-up of war hysteria, colonialism, racism and the growing army/police 'interface' should take the form of labour movement opposition to Services recruitment and Services propaganda, stepping-up of anti-imperialist work within the labour movement, especially the TUs, and the 'anti-imperialist connection' should be made in all leaflets we participate in producing, especially cuts campaigns leaflets. Special broad group material should be produced for distribution on the estates during local and general election periods.

6. The potential of END should be very carefully looked into by the NC and EC and discussions with TILC partners in Europe should be undertaken regarding their attitude to END, also with the Solidarity TU Working Group, as END is a European movement. We must be careful not to commit ourselves to any campaigning which compromises our policy of Soviet defencism, while at the same time seeking to extend links with independent trade unionists, socialists and feminists in Eastern Europe.

REPORT ON THE SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

Cunliffe, Kinnell, Smith

We are proposing that the National Committee elections be done by the Single Transferable Vote system.

This means that you vote by ranking candidates in order of preference 1, 2, 3, etc., not just by putting Xs.

Your vote goes first to the candidate you have ranked no.1. If it does not help that candidate get elected (because s/he already has enough votes, or has very few votes), then your vote is transferred to your second preference. And so on.

STV is more complicated to count than the X-vote system. But it also has many advantages. The crucial political advantage for our purposes is that under X-vote even large minorities tend to get wiped out. In a conference where 51% support group A and 49% support group B, if each group votes solidly for a group slate, then group A will sweep the board and group B will get no representation on the committee.

This cannot happen under STV. STV produces proportional representation. As long as members of a 49% group vote for candidates of their own group as top preferences (in any order they choose), they are bound to get about 49% of the places on the committee.

Comrades have asked how the transfer of votes is done. The details are fairly complicated, and we will produce fuller notes for the conference. We urge comrades not to get frightened off by the arithmetic. The basic point about STV is the political advantages. However, for those interested, here is an outline of the procedure recommended by the Electoral Reform Society. (Other slightly different procedures are possible, but they do not affect the general quality of the STV system).

DETAILS

First the votes are counted according to the first preferences.

A quota is calculated by dividing the total number of votes by the number of places to be filled, plus 1. So if there are 186 votes and 30 places to be filled, the quota is 186 divided by 31, i.e. 6.

Anyone with the quota, or more, is elected at the first count. Then votes are transferred.

Where elected candidates have a surplus over the quota, the surplus is transferred to the next preferences. Candidates at the bottom of the poll are also eliminated, and all their votes transferred to their next preferences.

Thus the total votes cast are redistributed by transfers so that eventually - in the example given - 30 successful candidates all have 6 votes each (or maybe more for the last candidate to be elected), and the remaining 6 votes (or fewer) are shared among the unsuccessful candidates. Almost every voter has directly helped to elect a candidate, either by his/her first preference or by a lower preference.

A group of 60 like-minded comrades who vote for candidates representing their views as top preferences is bound to get 10 of them elected, because they have 10 quotas of votes. It doesn't matter how many candidates come from that group, or whether the group all vote the same person no.1 or 20 different people no.1. When the 10 quotas of votes are distributed by transfers, we must end up with 10 candidates from the group having a quota each. If the group stands more than 10 candidates, then which of those ten gets elected will be determined by the voters' preferences.

How are transfers done?

Suppose a candidate has 30 votes and the quota is 20. Then the surplus is 10. So we want to transfer 10 votes. But which 10? It would be arbitrary just to